

XX. *Transactions of the Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta.* Vol. IV.
Calcutta, 1829, pp. 449. 8vo.

The Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta was instituted on the first of March, 1823, for the purpose, as stated in their resolutions, of advancing professional knowledge, for the mutual benefit of their members, more particularly with reference to Indian diseases and treatment; and for the promoting by every means, the study of such branches of natural history, as are connected with the practice of medicine, or lead to medical research. The transactions of the society bear ample evidence of the zeal and success with which these objects have been pursued. In less than eight years this society has published four volumes, embracing a large mass of information respecting the diseases of India, its indigenous medicinal plants, the medical topography of its most important places, and in addition, many highly interesting cases illustrative of the various branches of the healing art.

It would be vain to attempt to transfer to our pages, all this valuable mass of information; we shall, however, from time to time, enrich our periscope with some of the most important articles;* but at present we must restrict ourselves to an account of a few of the most interesting papers in the last volume of their transactions..

The first we shall notice is a paper on the employment of large doses of ipecacuanha in dysentery, without exciting vomiting, by W. TWISING, Esq. The author admits the propriety of venesection and corresponding remedies in the early or inflammatory stage, but strongly recommends the employment of ipecacuanha in very large doses, for the purpose of relieving tenesmus and irritation, restoring a healthy state of the alvine evacuations, and in more remote stages of the disease, promoting the healing of the intestinal ulcers. Mr. Twising's plan consists in first cleaning out the bowels by a dose of castor oil: twelve hours after this has operated freely, he gives six grains of powdered ipecacuanha, with four grains of extract of gentian, and five grains of pil. hydrar. in three pills, which are to be repeated every night at bed time, and at day-light in the morning a small dose of compound powder of jalap. By these means he says that a cessation of all the distressing symptoms are procured, and it is then sufficient to continue six grains of ipecacuanha, with four grains of extract of gentian every night, giving a very small dose of compound powder of jalap, or a moderate dose of oil every morning, for four or five days more. During the above treatment great attention is requisite to the quantity of food used, as well as its quality. Not more than six ounces of food and drink together should be taken at one time, nor should this quantity be repeated oftener than is absolutely requisite to prevent the patient from sinking; and in severe acute cases, half this quantity should not be exceeded.

When this plan of medicine and diet is followed, Mr. T. says that ipecacuanha seldom produces vomiting, and that he has often given twelve grains of this article with eight grains of extract of gentian in four pills, without exciting vomiting; and half that quantity to a child thirteen years of age without causing

* Several of the papers in the early volumes of the transactions have been already noticed in the periscope of the preceding number of this Journal.

nausea. The gentian appears to control the emetic effects of the ipecacuanha, for three grains of the same ipecacuanha given alone, repeatedly vomited. The first effect, according to Mr. T. of ipecacuanha given in ordinary cases of acute dysentery, is generally a slight increase in the secretions of the bowels, the evacuations becoming more copious and feculent; pain and tenesmus are abated, while the quantity of blood and slime immediately decrease and soon disappear altogether.

"If the above treatment," says Mr. T. "be steadily pursued for a few days, scarcely any other medicine will be requisite in most cases which apply in an early stage of the disease. At the same time I most strenuously urge the necessity of a free use of the lancet, and repeated bleeding by leeches in all recent cases of dysentery when there is either pyrexia, morbid sensibility of the belly on pressure, evacuation of blood with the stools, or tenesmus. But when repeated bleedings have accomplished all that can be wished from them, ipecacuanha, with the other medicines above stated, will be found of infinite service in soothing irritability, and restoring a healthy state of the bowels. I need not add, that tepid baths, fomentations, and poultices over leech-bites while they are still bleeding, are useful. Where the free use of calomel has been chiefly relied on, and employed to salivate, in some instances a purging and tenesmus have still continued, and in these the combination of ipecacuanha and gentian has then been employed with the most happy results. Opium has generally appeared injurious in dysentery, except when given with calomel, so as to cause that medicine to be retained in the first portion of the intestines, while it may act on the secretions of the duodenum and liver."

A number of cases are related by Mr. T. illustrative of this plan of treatment, which appears to us worthy of consideration. We have repeatedly employed the ipecacuanha in dysentery, and often with manifest advantage, but always in small doses, and the great difficulty we have met with is to prevent its emetic effects; these it appears may be obviated by combining it with extract of gentian.

The next article we shall notice is on the lactucarium or lettuce opium, by J. GRAHAM, M. D. The sedative power of the lettuce has been known from the remotest antiquity—but the merit of first trying its effects upon the human economy, and showing its similarity to opium, is due to Professor J. R. Cox, of the University of Pennsylvania; some attention was also attracted to the article by the elder Dr. Duncan, who endeavoured to introduce it into use. It is asserted by most persons who have used this article, and particularly by Dr. Graham, that it produces sleep and allays pain with considerable certainty without being followed by any bad consequences or unpleasant feelings. The principal obstacle to the introduction of this medicine into use is probably the difficulty of preparing it, and the mode sanctioned by the London and Edinburgh Pharmacopœias is certainly troublesome, and Dr. G. says the very worst that has been proposed. We shall therefore transfer to our pages the one recommended by Dr. Graham. This gentleman prefers the coss lettuce, the cultivation of which he says, is attended with no difficulty, and resembles that of the poppy, only giving the lettuce sufficient space, (eight or ten inches asunder,) that they may be allowed to grow large, and not forced to run to seed too quickly.

"When the plant is about to flower, the milky secretion being then in the greatest abundance, it must be collected, and this is done in the following manner:—Having a cup to contain the juice fixed on a stand, about one foot

and a half high, and a couple of knives, one for collecting the milk, and another for cutting the stalk of the lettuce, you commence your operations by making a clean oblique division of the stem about an inch and a half from the top, when the milky secretion instantly exudes from both extremities, and must be taken up by the knife prepared for that purpose. You thus proceed by repeated similar divisions of the stalk, until all the juice is collected. The blade of the knife used for collecting the milk should have some elasticity, and be about two inches long by $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch broad, with a blunt edge; for if sharp, there will be collected with the milk a considerable quantity of the substance of the stalk. The cup should have a cross bar, and contain a little water, which will enable the collector more readily to remove the adhesive juice from his knife. By making the division of the stem a little oblique, it gives a larger surface for the milk to exude on, and renders it more easily collected. The secreted juice is only contained in the vessels of the bark and leaves, and is pellucid until brought into contact with the air, when it immediately becomes milky, and if permitted to stand for a short time, assumes the appearance of a granulated mass, loses its adhesive qualities, and gradually assumes a brownish colour, like that of opium. Lactucarium prepared in this way is pure lettuce opium: its quality, however, depends much on the size and excellence of the lettuce. If this is either small or of an inferior quality, or if the juice is collected from sprouts thrown out by old stems, it will contain a very great quantity of caoutchouc, what Mr. John, of Berlin, found on analysis to be its principal solid constituent; and as this seems to abound more or less in the drug, however prepared, it might be worth while to free it from this inert substance, were it not doubtful that it would, like most other extracts, have its medicinal efficacy impaired by any attempts to purify it."

We have no doubt, that the cultivation and preparation of this article might be made profitable, and we recommend it especially to our southern friends—as it is probable that the plant raised in a warm climate will possess more active properties than when cultivated in a cold one.

We might indicate among the particularly interesting papers in this volume, the account of the epidemic bronchitic fever of infants and young children, prevalent at Calcutta, in 1828, by the late Dr. J. Adam, secretary of the Society; Dr. Mouat's description of the cholera morbus in his majesty's 14th regiment at Berhampore; Dr. Butter's paper on public health in India; and also a very well drawn up and valuable account of the general and medical topography of the Neelgerries, by D. S. Young, Esq.

We may hereafter revert to these and several other articles in this volume, but at present we must close this notice. We cannot do so, however, without expressing a hope that the example of zeal and industry set by this society, will not be lost upon those of the United States, and that the latter will not allow of its being said that a single society in India, in half a dozen years has done more to advance a knowledge of the diseases, indigenous medicinal plants, and medical topography of that country, than all our societies have accomplished for these subjects, in relation to our own country, in half a century. We know that neither the disposition nor the abilities are wanting; there must be something wrong then in the management of our societies that they have not done more that will tell.

XXI. *Anatomical Demonstrations, or Colossal Illustrations of Human Anatomy.* By Professor Scerig. Translated from the German. Part I. A. Schloss, London, 1831, pp. 34, 8vo. with four folio plates.

Of this splendid work, which is to consist of six parts, we have received the first, containing four large folio plates with full references printed in octavo.

The first plate represents the superficial nerves of the head and face; the second exhibits the principal branches of that interesting nerve, the fifth pair, and the third and fourth plates are devoted to various views of the whole and several parts of the organs of hearing and sight.

These illustrations are all on a scale larger than life, are extremely accurate, and beautifully executed. The author has acted judiciously, it appears to us, in adopting a colossal scale for his figures. The difficulty of obtaining a knowledge of the minute parts of our anatomical structure has been felt by every student, and the small plates hitherto published for his assistance have often tended rather to perplex than assist him.

These plates will be very useful to the lecturer on anatomy; and every practitioner who takes upon himself to instruct pupils, and honestly wishes to give them the best facilities for the advancement of their studies, should possess a copy of this work.

XXII. *Anatomical Atlas on an entirely new plan.* By Professor M. J. WENKEN, Professor at the Royal Prussian University, Frederick William, at Bonn. A. Schloss. London, 1831.

This work is to consist of two sections containing sixty atlas sheets. The first section presents eight full-length views of the human body, of the adult size, each view composed of four atlas sheets. Two plates are devoted to front and back views of the human skeleton, and six others will exhibit the muscles, arteries, veins, nerves, and ligaments.

The second section will consist of twenty-eight atlas sheets, exhibiting the brain, organs of sense and respiration, the alimentary canal, the male and female organs of generation; the supplements to osteology, syndesmology, angi-ology and neurology, &c.

The whole work will be published in five parts, of which the first has already appeared and is now before us. This contains a front and back view of the male skeleton, occupying eight atlas sheets; and three plates, each consisting of one atlas sheet. The first of these plates exhibits various views and sections of the head and of the bones which enter into its composition, views of a fetal head, of the sacrum, of the first cervical vertebra, &c. &c. The second plate contains figures of the organs of hearing, voice and taste, and the third a posterior view of the pectoral viscera.

To the anatomical student these plates will be very useful, and to the popular lecturer on anatomy, actually invaluable. A general outline of anatomy is usually given to the senior classes in most of our colleges as a part of their regular course of study, and indeed it should enter into every liberal scheme of education. We have never seen any plates so well calculated to facilitate the